

MECHANICAL MEMORIES MAGAZINE

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The only UK magazine dedicated to vintage coin-operated amusement machines

Mechanical Memories Magazine

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Editorial

Hello, and welcome to the October magazine, which if all goes to plan should reach you all a little earlier in the month than last time. As a special treat, I'm not going to moan about Brighton this month, but my likely departure from that 24 carat dump (whoops, sorry) does make me wonder how many vintage penny arcades will be left in the coming years. As some of you may know, Clive lost his site on Southport pier earlier in the year, in addition to losing a smaller site at Swanage. I also know of another long-established penny arcade that is likely to close in the near future.

Clive has managed to re-site some of the Southport machines, although the long-term future of his new sites is doubtful. Some of the machines can now be found on Blackpool's North pier, where they have been operating throughout the summer. Whether or not the site can be sustained remains to be seen. The fact is, no one makes money from operating vintage machines, and I do have concerns for the future, particularly in these recessionary times. Anyway, I intend to publish an overview of penny arcades in the magazine early next year.

On a brighter note, I expect you're all looking forward to Coventry auction, which at the time of writing, is just six weeks away. More details on page 8, but just a gentle reminder to get those entry forms filled in and returned to me before the closing date, which is Monday 5th November. Please, please don't leave it to the last minute as usual, after all, you have had almost a year to think about it!

Well, that's it for now

Until next time, all the best

Jerry

Front Cover Picture: *BMCo Airplane automatic payout allwin (see page 10).*

Dreamland

MARGATE

Save Dreamland Update October 2012

PROJECT UP-DATE

Works are still progressing on the Dreamland Cinema building, under Thanet District Council's urgent work notices served last autumn, with the only remaining work being the reinstatement of the concrete windows. The initial window installation has taken place to the Hall by the Sea facade, and was successful, with off-site manufacturer progressing. Further deliveries will be made to enable completion of that façade prior to progressing to the Seafront elevation and curved corned units.

Organ enthusiasts will be pleased to learn that measures have been taken to safeguard the cinema's historic Compton Noterman organ from any further deterioration under a new urgent work notice. This Notice includes for the clearing of debris from the chambers and pipes and the completion of a full survey to determine the repair strategy. An order will shortly be placed with a well-known local organ expert – who has looked after the Dreamland instrument for many years – to begin the initial survey work.

Surveys are also taking place on the Scenic Railway to verify the condition prior to issuing tenders for the rebuild of the structure, running gear and trains.

MARGATE HOSTS HAMMER STUDIO'S SOUTH ENGLAND FILM PREMIER!

In celebration of Dreamland's cinematic heritage, The Dreamland Trust is bringing Hammer Film Studios to Margate for the South of England premier of the restored, 1957 Gothic classic, *The Curse of Frankenstein* (Cert 15), as part of Margate's Halloween Horror Feast this October.

The matinee premier screening, on Sunday 28 October, includes a presentation and talk by Hammer's official historian, Marcus Hearn, on the studio's important place in the history of the horror genre. Formerly an editor at Marvel Comics, Marcus has written for *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *Doctor Who Magazine* and *SFX*. His numerous books include *The Hammer Story*, *Hammer Glamour*, *The Art of Hammer* and *The Hammer Vault*.

Hammer Film Productions was launched in 1934 – the same year that Dreamland's iconic Grade II* listed 2,200 seat cinema complex was built on Margate's seafront. The Dreamland cinema was to become the forerunner for Britain's super-cinema chain and features in an exclusive, free photographic exhibition at the Harbour Arm Gallery, Margate from Friday 26th October until Sunday 4th November.

Bookings are now being taken at the Theatre Royal Box Office 0845 130 1786 – the Box Office will only be open from 4pm prior to any evening performance and two hours prior to any matinee performance. Outside of these hours you can leave an answer message or email box@theatreroyal margate.com.

Tickets for the double bill film screening and Hammer Studio talk are £10 per person or £8 concessions. For special rate group bookings email me at: jan@dreamlandmargate.com.

DREAMLAND REVISITED

Photographer, Sam Bénard, returns to Margate this October to exhibit a selection of his work from an exclusive photo shoot of Dreamland's disused Grade II* listed cinema complex during the council's urgent works to the building in 2011.

Never without a camera in hand, Sam is eager to experiment with different styles and techniques producing dramatic and haunting images of empty public spaces and buildings with just a hint of human presence; whether that be in a cemetery in Madrid or Dreamland's iconic 2,200 seat cinema.

The photographs will be exhibited from Friday 26th October until Sunday 4th November in the Margate Harbour Arm Gallery <http://www.margateharbourarm.co.uk> alongside images from The Dreamland Trust's archive contrasting the building's current condition with the elegant 1934 interiors. This free exhibition is open daily between 10am and 5pm.

Nick Laister

Nick Laister (Chairman, The Dreamland Trust)

Jan Leandro (Audience Development Officer)

www.dreamlandmargate.com

www.savedreamland.co.uk

The Encyclopaedia of Arcade Video Games

by Bill Kurtz

Here's a fun-filled trip back in time to the colourful arcades of the 1970s and '80s. More than 600 photos present the dot-munching PAC MAN, bomb-dropping SPACE INVADERS, and other favourites.

Nostalgic baby boomers have made arcade video games one of the hottest collectibles around. This comprehensive reference presents photos of every popular video game manufactured, along with some long-forgotten machines and even some you've probably never heard of. You'll also find information about the manufacturers who produced these classic games, a section about video game collectibles, and information on how to locate your favourite games and start your own collection.

With many never-before-published photographs, beginning collectors and long-time game enthusiasts alike are sure to enjoy this nostalgic and informative look at the world of arcade video games.

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Publisher: Schiffer Publishing

Our Price: £31.99

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The Encyclopedia of **Arcade Video Games**



Bill Kurtz



A Schiffer Book for Collectors With Price Guide

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Coventry '12

Sunday 25th November is the day you've all been looking forward to! It only happens once a year; the biggest vintage coin-op event in the UK, and we believe, the biggest event of its type in Europe. For those of you who will be visiting for the first time, the event is presented by myself and fellow collector Jeremy Clapham – and as we always say, it is an event organised by collectors, for collectors. Once again, we'll be at the Coundon Social Club, just outside central Coventry. The venue is pretty easy to find, and regulars of course need only switch their cars and vans onto autopilot!

Entry forms for the auction are included with the magazine this month, so please return them by the closing date of Monday 5th Nov. Please also try to include pictures of all machines entered – either by returning with the entry form, or emailing separately. As many as possible will be included in the catalogue, and as usual, I shall be posting all pictures on my website. One word about reserves – if you intend setting a reserve on any of your lots, PLEASE give it some thought and ensure that it is the lowest at which you are prepared to sell. In recent years, it has become disruptive having to change reserves on the day of sale because vendors have 'changed their minds'!

Entry to the auction is by catalogue, which can be ordered now, although of course they won't be ready to post until a couple of weeks before the event. Please do order in advance, as it helps us to judge the print run. It also saves on postage, as I can include them with the November magazines.

*So, fill in those entry forms,
order your catalogue
and we'll see you on 25th Nov.*

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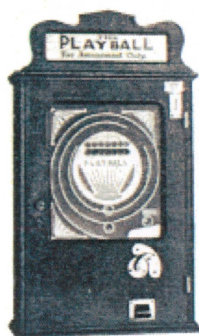
COIN REPEAT WALL MACHINES

Little Mickey



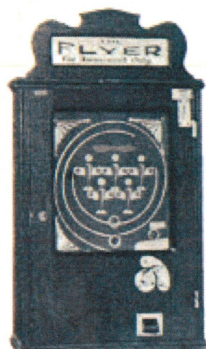
42

Playball



43

Flyer



44

Lucky Star



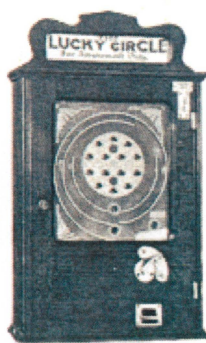
45

Cresta Run



46

Lucky Circle



47

No Amusement Arcade is complete without its quota of wall machines. The above is fair sample of various types. A successful shot automatically returns coin to player and also ball for another shot, which again pays out if successful.

All Height 2ft 1in. x width 1ft. 6in. x depth 8in. and flash 6in. Weight 47 lbs.

The BMCo Coin Repeat Wall Machine

By Richard Goddard

Design is an interesting and fascinating subject. Take for instance the WWII Avro Lancaster bomber designed by Roy Chadwick in 1939-40 and developed from the Avro Manchester; the Lancaster story is the stuff of legend. Then consider the enormous design leap from the Lancaster to the Avro Vulcan V Bomber with its huge swept delta wing, again designed by Roy Chadwick but conceived only 12 years later, subsequently entering RAF service in 1956. However, the only similarity in design is in their function; they both fly and were both designed as heavy bombers.

Now consider the British Manufacturing Company, who in the early years of the 1930s decided to take a radically different design approach to the standard allwin mechanism. This design leap involved a complete rethink of the internal workings for a wall machine by creating an automatic payout, and the design difference from the traditional allwin mechanism to the BMCo automatic mechanism was as remarkable as the difference in the design change from Lancaster to Vulcan.

BMCo were born from a restructuring of an established business: Joseph Mason & Co. sometime around 1914 and according to Paul Braithwaite in his book *Arcades and Slot Machines* they were '*catering for every need of the rifle range proprietor*'. In the 1920s the Company was owned by Charles Featherstone and he developed a friendship and later a business partnership with Fred Bolland. In 1931 we see the first reference to BMCo made machines in a Bolland advertisement.

Throughout the 1930s BMCo produced many wall machines, of which there were numerous variations but fundamentally based upon a well-trying and tested 'Saxony Allwin' design. Put a penny into the machine, which will then travel down a chute and trip a lever to release a ball into the playfield. Flick the ball around the playfield and it will either enter a winning hole or losing hole. If it enters a winning hole it will come to rest against an internal rocking lever, which rotates to allow the release of a winning penny via a lever arm mechanism activated by an external rotating knob, operated by the player. If the ball enters the losing hole, it is retained within the machine ready for insertion of the next penny. A fairly simple but effective mechanical design, so why change? I will return to this question and my theory on change later.

In the early years of the 1930s BMCo produced a wall machine called **All Winners**, which automatically returned your penny upon a win, and in 1933 another mechanical auto payout machine, the **Wizard**. But the 'internals' were based mainly

upon a traditional type of allwin mechanism. Perhaps in an endeavour to push the company forward and expand the boundaries of wall machine design the company decided to take a 'Lancaster – Vulcan' design leap with the allwin mechanism because what they came up with next was a device that I consider particularly imaginative and 'revolutionary' - in more ways than one.

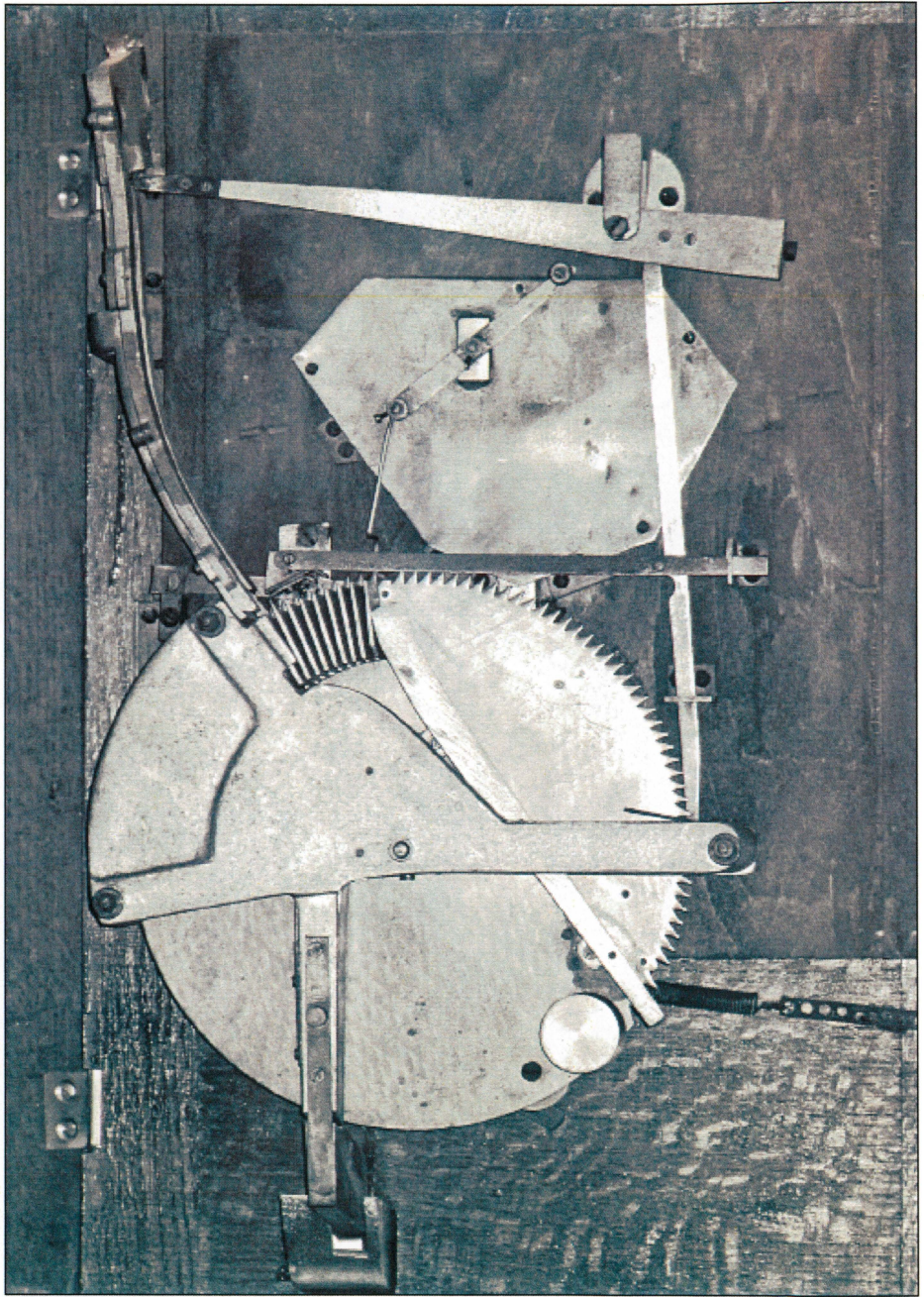
On 9th May 1934 Henry Francis Esdaile submitted a provisional specification for a patent entitled '*Improvements in or relating to Vending and Amusement Apparatus*'. This was for a completely different type of automatic payout machine. Following a further 'provisional specification' on 3rd October 1934 and a 'complete specification' on 9th May 1935, a patent was granted on 11th November 1935. The innovative BMCo automatic payout mechanism had been born. It is not known whether Esdaile or Featherstone was the inventor of this mechanism. Records show the 'applicant' as Esdaile whilst the 'inventor' is not named. My thoughts are that they both developed the mechanism together but Esdaile, having had two previous patents granted, submitted the application.

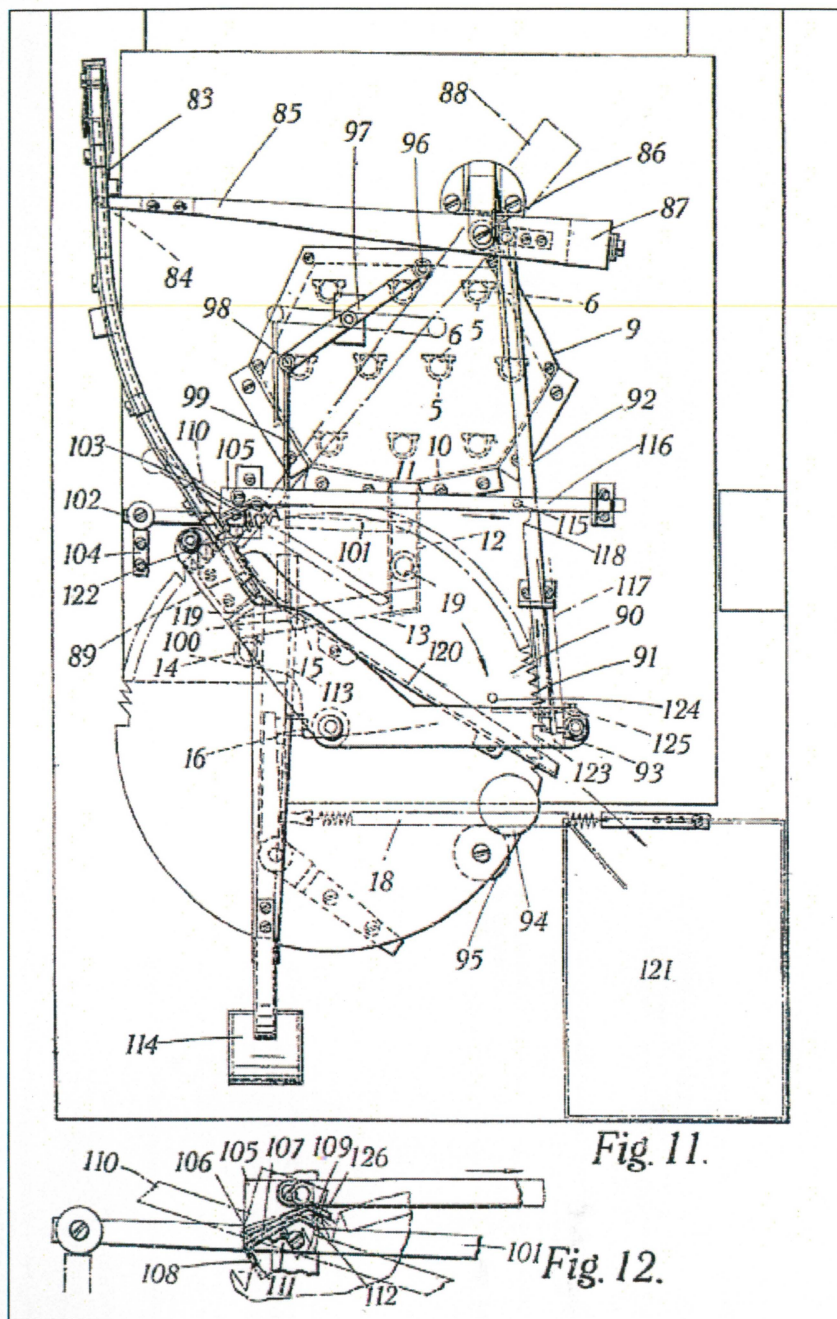
Esdaile's Patent covered two types of auto payout mechanism, one for coins and one for gifts; it is the coin payout that is described here. BMCo advertised these as Coin Repeat Wall Machines in one of their promotional leaflets, which show six variations: **Little Mickey** (also known as The Ideal), **Playball, Flyer** (also known as AirPlane), **Lucky Star, Cresta Run and Lucky Circle**. The company also produced these machines with a standard allwin style mechanism, perhaps because they were cheaper to manufacture or the standard mechanism was just more able to take the every day knocks and bumps during transportation by the travelling showmen.

The main visual difference between these machines and a BMCo 'standard' allwin cabinet is the very deep bottom transom part of the door, this being much deeper than the normal BMCo allwin door. The coin entry is always on the slant as opposed to vertical and the coin payout cup is rectangular which was quite a departure from their usual attractive payout plate with its two pins to catch the coin. The third difference is that the auto payout obviously does not require a payout knob to turn and these are therefore not present. However, I have seen a few coin repeat wall machines with what appears to be a payout knob on the door and in these instances the automatic mechanism must have been stripped out and replaced by a standard allwin mechanism.

Although BMCo made these automatic payout allwins in a number of different playfield styles, I think it is fitting that the photo showing the mechanism is from an 'Airplane' coin repeat machine; an allwin that I like very much with its delightfully crafted aircraft cups, propeller motif and bursting sunray spandrels. Although the playfield of the automatic payout allwins differed, all of these 'coin repeat wall machine' variations contain the same inventive working mechanism.

The design of this innovative automatic mechanism centres around a rotating Y shaped carousel that contains 22 slots for pennies, located radially on the carousel top edge. The carousel is secured to a large brass toothed wheel which has a weight fixed to the lower right of the brass wheel close to its edge thus creating an eccentric force that is trying to rotate the wheel/carousel in a clockwise direction.





When a coin is inserted, it descends down a curved coin guide tripping the toe of a long horizontal coin lever, causing this lever to travel in a downward arc, which in turn activates the ball release mechanism. The long horizontal coin lever has a vertical arm connected to its heel which is located to the right of the lever pivot point. Therefore, when the coin lever is pushed down by a penny, the heel being on the opposite side of the pivot, moves up, bringing with it the vertical arm. The lower end of the vertical arm has a dog that engages with the toothed brass wheel. The upward movement of the vertical arm pulls on a tooth, subsequently causing the whole carousel assembly to rotate anti-clockwise thus bringing an empty coin slot into position ready to catch the falling penny. Absolutely ingenious.

The long horizontal coin lever is designed such that it is set at a slightly different arc of travel to the curved coin chute. Therefore, at the end of the curved coin chute and at the coin lever's lowest point of travel, the coin lever arc line is just outside the curve of the coin chute. There is no longer anything to hold the coin and the penny therefore drops into the next available empty carousel slot and the coin lever swings back to the horizontal position ready for the next penny to be inserted. If all slots are full then the coin is diverted to the moneybox via a chute on the carousel next to the last coin slot position. This whole lever system incorporates adjustable components to balance the lever arm.

When a winning shot occurs, the ball trips a lever arm, which in turn allows a detent that is engaged and holding the toothed brass wheel in position, to release hold of the wheel by one tooth at a time. The carousel then rotates clockwise owing to the eccentric force created by the weight, and the last coin slot occupied by the penny subsequently ends up over a vertical channel. The penny therefore falls down this channel and ends up in the payout cup whilst the ball is returned to the playfield. It all happens so quickly that when a ball enters one of the aircraft cups and a win is obtained, your penny is in the payout cup before you realise it.

The whole mechanism is robust and beautifully engineered (there are also roller bearings incorporated to reduce friction). It was obviously not a cheap machine to produce, but then you always had to pay for quality. One element I particularly like about this mechanism is that the winning coin is always the last coin used to play the machine. Therefore, if a blank disk or foreign coin is inserted and you win then it is returned to you and not a penny stacked in a coin tube waiting to be won, as per a normal allwin. Melvyn Wright has an excellent section on his website with many photos and a greater in-depth description that fully explains the whole working of the mechanism and is well worth a look at <http://www.melright.com/slots/bmcauto.htm>

But back to the question I posed earlier: why bother to change an established and well-tried mechanism? For that answer I think we need to take a wider look at the world outside of slot machines. Following WW1 the old order had passed and with it traditional values and concepts; it was replaced by a new order, a 'new age'. Although the country was in a state of economic despair owing to the Great Depression of 1929, the late 1920s and early 1930s conversely were heady days for art and design.

Movements such as Art Deco, The Bauhaus, Surrealism and Dadaism were all the rage and the 'Machine Age' was then considered to be at its zenith. In 1931 Great Britain won the Schneider Cup air race trophy for the 3rd consecutive time and 1934 saw the launch of the prestigious Queen Mary Ocean liner. Machines of all types had undergone major and significant developments in all spheres and beautiful Art Deco advertising posters of ships, trains and aviation were being produced to celebrate this.

My thoughts are that Charles Featherstone was inspired by the 'new age' of design regardless of (or perhaps because of) the 'Great Slump' and the developments, concepts and movements during this period influenced and motivated him to embrace the initiative of developing, broadening and stretching design, subsequently adopting this concept to his wall machines.

The company were certainly forward looking, being responsible for introducing the 'multi cup' onto the traditional galleried allwin playfield and also introducing the plastic backflash, often brightly coloured. They produced some lovely Art Deco style cabinets with decorative chromed metal profiles and motifs on the playfields of their allwins during the 1930s. Their 'traffic light' allwin is a direct reference to contemporary modernity of this era and the Flyer/Air Plane allwin a celebration of aviation. Time has now eroded the reason why BMCo decided to create their automatic mechanical payout allwin. Auto-payouts such as the Clown Catcher had been around for years but at the time, automatic payout was not usually found on wall machines; the vast majority of payouts were manually controlled via the turn of a knob. What we do know is that this mechanism had a short production life, probably no more than 3 to 4 years of manufacture.

So there we have it, a mechanism born in the golden age of design and reminiscent of the design transformation from Lancaster to Vulcan. The BMCo automatic payout mechanism for their 'coin repeat wall machine' was a completely radical design and a drastic departure from a previously adopted solution, but there the analogy ends. As the 1930s decade crept towards its close, dark storm clouds of conflict were gathering again ready to unleash its deadly inclement intentions during September 1939. The need to design and manufacture a machine such as the Lancaster was an essential prerequisite of the dark war-years struggle. A struggle that not only claimed many lives but also many businesses owing to a shortage of workers and materials. It is ironic but not surprising that the extreme and severe situation that gave birth to one successful design, the Lancaster, should also substantially contribute to the demise of BMCo, who I believe were a highly design conscious company. The British Manufacturing Co were among those many firms who did not survive the War, the mechanism was not to be produced or developed further by anyone else. Charles Featherstone retired in 1946 and the company was formally closed.

In the late 1930s or perhaps in the early war years the company did produce an electro-mechanical allwin with a war conflict theme called Fleet Air Arm. This machine, however, paid out automatically via a solenoid and bore no resemblance at all to the innovative automatic payout mechanism.

As many readers will know, BMCo patterns/components were subsequently obtained by Oliver Whales and used on his early machines. Whales went on to produce beautifully jingoistic and patriotic machines such as Allies Victory Ball, Khyber Pass (both based on the BMCo Cresta Run V shaped gallery), Defiant, Spitfire and, utilising those charming BMCo aircraft cups, Target For Tonight. I like to think that most of these wall machines in their own small way helped to boost the morale of people in what little pleasures they had during those dark years. If BMCo had survived the war, who knows what the British Manufacturing Company would have come up with next: a very modern 'Vulcan' of the Allwin world?

Richard Goddard

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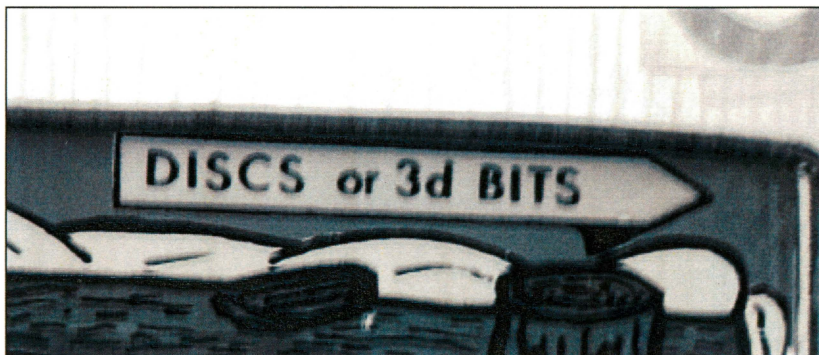


Bar One

By Robert Rowland

I have recently added to my collection of slots an electro-mechanical wall machine called **Bar One**. What's interesting about this one is that it operates on 3d bits or 'discs'. I assume that my machine would probably have been operated in a club, because although I do remember seeing these machines in various amusement arcades back in the 1960s, they always operated on 1d with the jackpot (three Bars) paying 12d. My machine pays that amount for a single Cherry, the top prize being twenty thre'penny bits – that's five shillings, which was normally paid out in tokens.

Looking inside my machine, you can see that there is a separate coin channel that would direct discs past a micro switch, and then directly into the cash box below. I can see no indication that it ever paid out discs, as there are no signs that any other payout section has been removed. So maybe these discs (which I have never seen) were available from the bar? I really don't know. If you roll a thre'penny bit down the disc channel it doesn't trip the micro switch, so these discs would have been larger. Can anyone shed any light on the discs? If you can, please inform Jerry and he can then pass the information onto me.



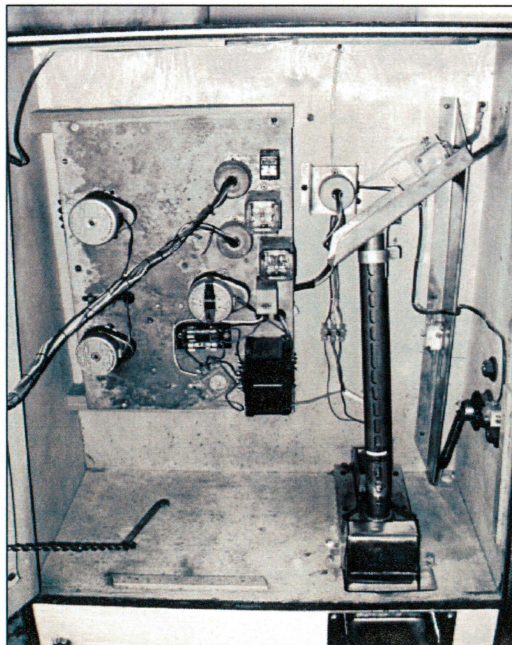
Okay, back to the machine itself. In my opinion Bar One is a nice, good-looking wall machine. It measures twenty inches across and twenty-seven inches in height. It was made by a small firm called *Cam Automatics*, who also produced the small penny pushers like **Davy Jones Locker** and **Aladdin's Cave**, all made with similar cabinets. The front flash of my machine displays a grid of fifteen square boxed symbols, that's five rows of three, made up of Cherry, Orange, Plum, Bell and Bar.

On insertion of a three penny bit (or disc) you pull the one-armed bandit handle on the right, which sets the fifteen symbols flashing from about three seconds up to around eight seconds. At the end of each play, three symbols remain lit – hopefully three of a kind in a full line across. Thanks to the variable timer, there is no set sequence to this machine; each play is random, with no consecutive play the same. Pretty simple really. An interesting point is that some other Bar One machines that I have seen do not have a handle to pull, the lights simply start flashing on insertion of a coin. I do prefer the machines with the pull handle.

Talking about percentages now, my machine is pretty mean! On various occasions it has gone well over twenty plays without a winner coming up. The three jackpot Bars do come up but very rarely. I can say that they only come up once in over one hundred plays. I suppose it is understandable though, as five shillings was a good win back in the 1960s.

We've uploaded a little video on Youtube for you all to see. Just search *Bar One 3d bit machine* and you can see what I am writing about.

Robert Rowland



Inside the machine, showing the 3d coin tube and separate chute for discs.

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